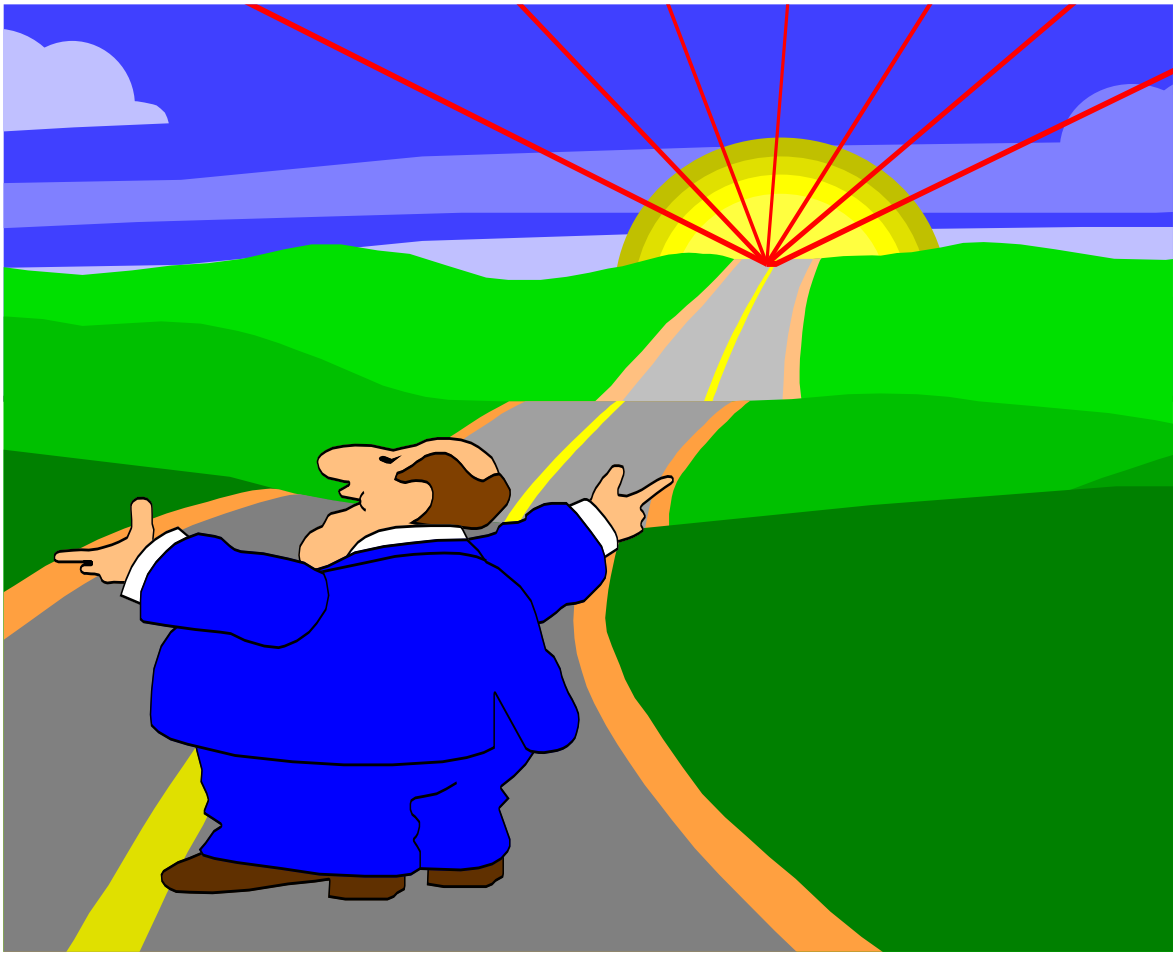

GETTING CLOSER TO GOD

THE PRAYER SERIES

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GETTING CLOSER TO GOD
THE PRAYER SERIES

Introduction
In Isaiah 56:1-3, it says: ***This is what the Lord says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is right at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil". Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely exclude me from His people". And let not any eunuch complain, "I am a dry tree". …***
Verses 6-7; And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it, and who holds fast to my covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, FOR MY HOUSE WILL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS."

PART 1 - EFFECTIVE PRAYER

James recognised this important issue and addressed it in James Chapter 4:3-7 as follows; ***"For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans (and unbelievers) choose to do ~ living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation (as you used to do), and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason, the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the Spirit. The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled, so that you can pray".***

If we look around us today, we see that most of the praying we hear about nowadays is largely ineffective, **BECAUSE MANY BELIEVERS HAVE NOT LEARNT "HOW TO PRAY" PROPERLY.**

- **HOW DO WE DEVELOP EFFECTIVE PRAYERS TO GOD?**
- **CONSIDER THESE FOUR IMPORTANT STEPS.**

Step I. **LEARN TO ASK GOD EFFECTIVELY. (**Refer to Matt. 26:41) Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

- **Jesus taught us to "Watch and pray"**. He wanted us to learn the value of ***claiming specific requests***.
- He wanted us to become sensitive to the specific details of a need.
- Although it is good and heart-warming to hear small children pray: "God bless the whole world, Amen". This kind of prayer is hardly the type that changes communities and/or nations.
- Too often, older Christians even make excuses for such praying. Some say, "The Holy Spirit knows the need, so why should I bother with the details".
- The truth of the matter is that God wants us to be alert to the needs of others round about us. This is why Jesus was so direct when He told us to **"Watch and pray".**

Step II. **ASK CONSISTENTLY** (refer to Luke 18:1-8) The Persistent Widow.

- When a child asks a father for a particular item, day after day after day, for many weeks, one thing is for certain - the child really longs for the object requested.
- The same should be true with our praying. Certainly, God could answer our prayers, any, (or all of them) the very moment we pray to Him (the first time).
- In His wisdom, however, He knows that in delaying an answer to our prayers, it might teach us even more on the secrets of prayer.
- He sometimes withholds the blessing for a time, knowing that we will learn the value of being consistent in prayer, even when we don't see the immediate answers to our prayers and petitions to God.
- **REMEMBER: PRAYER CHANGES THINGS FOR THE BETTER ~~ NO PRAYERS - NO CHANGES!**

Step III. **ASK SYSTEMATICALLY (**Refer Is. 41:21) ***"Present your case" says the Lord, "set forth your arguments", says Jacob's king.***

- **Do you have a goal or plan for your prayer time**? It seems that we have a plan for just about everything in our lives - except our prayer time.
- Powerful praying is not only intelligent praying, but it is systematic praying as well. God told the nation of Israel to

produce "their strong reasons" when coming before Him (in Prayer).

- Do you bring your reasons for prayer before the Lord each day - systematically and effectively?
- Learn to use a Prayer List and a World Map to help you pray more effectively.

Step IV. ASK FERVENTLY (refer Luke 22:44)

In this text Luke is describing the intensity and fervency in which Jesus Christ prays to His Father when He is in Gethsemane: ***"And being in agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were drops of blood falling down to the ground".***

- A person who attacks a problem "earnestly" does so **with an intense desire for victory** and **a stubborn refusal for defeat**. He puts his whole effort and being into reaching a desired goal. So, it must be so with our praying.
- Moses pleaded, Jacob wrestled, Elijah cried out to the Lord, Daniel mourned, and Jesus wept. If we really want to see our prayers answered, we must be willing to make great sacrifices of both time and energy. **EFFORTLESS PRAYER IS OFTEN FRUITLESS PRAYER**.

CONCLUSION:

Truly effective prayer has many qualities - but at the heart of it you, will find ***perseverance.*** Refer Eph. 6:18 - where we are told (after putting on the full armour of God) to pray for the saints with perseverance.

George Mueller was an ordinary man, who came to England and saw the homeless children on the streets. He had compassion for them and started the first orphanage in a particular city, praying to God for accommodation, food and clothing and schooling for these children, for more than 40 years. At one stage there were more than 2,000 children in the orphanage.

He writes that throughout this whole time, God never refused to answer his prayers and the Holy Spirit continually moved on people's hearts to provide food and clothing, as well as medical supplies for these children.

George Mueller once wrote: "**The great point is never to give up in your praying until the answer comes**. I have been praying for 63 years and 8 months for my friend's conversion to Jesus Christ. He is not saved yet, **but he will be**. Because I have faith in God, how can it be otherwise, I am praying".

The day came when George Mueller's friend received Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. It happened the very moment George Mueller's casket was being lowered into the ground in the cemetery. There near the open

graveside, Mueller's acquaintance gave his heart to God. Persistent, fervent prayer had won another battle against the enemy.

PART 2 - THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

Introduction [Definition]. "Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of God Almighty. If prayer really does tap into all of God's power, surely then it's necessary for all believers, of every age, so that God can pour out His blessings to us, as our answered prayers.

Let us examine six spiritual blessing from prayer.

1. **PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR PERSONAL SALVATION (**Refer Romans 10:13).

   No man (or woman) can find Christ as their personal Saviour **except they pray the SINNER'S PRAYER**. Romans 10:13 declares: ***"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".*** To call upon the Lord - is to offer up a prayer to Him. This is not to say that our prayer saves us, NO! - only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from all our sins. But prayer to God is our necessary "confession" that activates the blood of Christ to cleanse our sins.

2. **PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR PERSONAL VICTORY (**refer James 4:7-8)

   All power over Satan is directly related to the Christian's life of prayer. James declares, ***"Submit you're self therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you".*** Real prayer includes both a submission to God and a resistance to Satan. Both of these goals are accomplished as we "draw nigh to God" in prayer.

3. **PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR PERSONAL GROWTH (**Rev. 3:20)

   A very important truth is revealed about spiritual growth in the frequently quoted verse Rev. 3:20. ***Jesus says; "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me".*** Personal salvation can only begin when we open our heart's door to Christ. This is only the beginning however. Jesus wants us to sup with Him daily - something that every Christian needs to learn and understand. This is the only way to guarantee lasting and continual spiritual growth.

4. **PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR PERSONAL GUIDANCE** (Refer Prov. 3:5-6)

Perhaps the finest piece of advice found in the Scriptures about divine guidance is found in the Proverbs, as recorded by King Solomon - who, we recall was given a double portion of Wisdom by God, to rule over the nation of Israel.

In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read: ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths".***

We **"TRUST"** and **"ACKNOWLEDGE"** God best, by meeting with Him daily in our prayer life. If we do this according to Proverbs 3:5-6, then God promises to "direct our paths". It is always better to be on a path directed by God, than on a path directed by man. **God's path is perfect - man's path is imperfect!**

5. **PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR PERSONAL STRENGTH** (refer Psalm 55:22)

It is impossible to maintain spiritual strength, when we constantly carry unnecessary burdens of life around with us - they just weigh you down.

The Psalmist said: ***"Cast thy burdens upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee; He shall never suffer (allow) the righteous to be moved".***

"Cast" means to get rid of - with great force. When we cast our burdens on the Lord, He promises to sustain us - giving us all the strength we need to continue steadfast in our faith. The act of "casting" is an act of prayer.

6. **PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR PERSONAL BOLDNESS** (refer Acts 4:31)

When we study the Scriptures, we find that prayer - in some form or another - was the necessary foundation for all instances of courage recorded in the Scriptures. In Acts 4:31 we read; ***"And when they had prayed, the whole place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness".***

Prayer not only shook the assembly hall, but brought the power of the Holy Spirit down upon all persons present.

Soon a new boldness was discovered in their witnessing about Jesus.

A famous preacher once said: **"Whole nights of prayer** always produces **whole days of soul winning".**

Don't you want to be able to pray like that?

CONCLUSION:

Prayer is unquestionably **"THE" most vital breath of the Christian experience**. If for no other reason than it is necessary, simply because God has chosen to make it necessary. The great missionary E. Stanley Jones said: "When you pray, you align yourself with the **purpose** and **power** of God and He is able to do things through you, He could not do otherwise.

For this is an open universe, where some things are left open, contingent upon us doing them. If we don't do them, they will never be done. For God has left certain things open to prayer - things which will never be done - except that we pray for them to be implemented.

So, in conclusion; **PRAYER CHANGES THINGS!**
IN HEAVEN, AND THEN ON THE EARTH!
NO PRAYER - NO CHANGE!

PART 3 - FOUR SECRETS TO HAVING SUCCESSFUL and MEANINGFUL PRAYERS

Introduction

A significant promise to all prayer warriors is found in Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, as recorded in Romans 8:26; ***"Like-wise the Spirit also helps our infirmities; for (sometimes) we know not what we should pray for; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered".***

When we pray using the Holy Spirit, as indicated above, **the prayer is always in line with the perfect will of God for our lives and circumstances.**

God has spoken much to His Church by and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the agent to speak forth His written Word. Thus, whenever we study the Scriptures to learn about prayer, God's Spirit teaches us more about "**how to" pray**. [***The "technique of praying."***]

1. **PRAY SCRIPTURALLY** (refer John 15:7) ***"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."***

   To pray Scripturally, is the only way we can be assured we are praying according to God's will. Apostle John said, ***"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."*** (1. John 5:14)

   Scripture tells us that all prayers are answered - if we ask according to God's will.

Note the words **"IF WE ASK ANYTHING."** We can only understand God's will by continually studying His Word. This is why we must learn to pray according to the Scriptures.

Only as we abide in Christ, and **His Words abide in us**, will we be able to know that what we are claiming (in prayer) is truly in accordance with God's will for the situation.

If we ask God for a million dollars, and the desire of our hearts is not in accordance with God's will, God cannot give the money to us. God still answers our prayer - **but the answer is NO!**

2. PRAY THOROUGHLY (Ephesians 6:18)

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert (on watch) and always keep on praying for all the saints."

It is important as part of your Christian life to develop a devotional habit which is thorough in its scope. Paul told the Ephesians to pray "always with **all prayer."** Paul was in fact reminding them that there are different types of prayers, as identified in God's Word and that we have to develop expertise in each prayer type. Prayers are broken into three basic types:

a) **Prayers of Adoration** - prayers to focus on God;

b) **Prayers of Petition** - prayers that focus on personal needs;

c) **Prayers of Intercession** - prayers that focus on the needs of others.

Have you developed a prayer life that is thorough and regularly consists of these three prayer types? If not, then maybe this is why your prayers are not being answered all the time.

3. PRAY INTIMATELY (Matt. 6:6)

Jesus said; "***But when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door behind you, pray to your Father which is in secret"***

Jesus was stressing the importance of having an intimate relationship with God. The only way to know someone intimately is to spend much time alone with them - on a one-on-one basis.
The same is true on the spiritual level. Like the Psalmist, we must desire to know God above all else in our lives. We must desire to be alone with the Lord, to ***"behold His beauty".*** (Ps. 27:4)

4. PRAY INTENSELY (Refer Duet. 4:29)

Throughout the Scriptures we are challenged to seek God with all our heart - all our mind and with all our strength. This theme is frequently found in both the Old and the New Testaments. Intensity means to work at a task with exceptionally high levels of concentration. It means to put everything aside and give all our attention to the matter at hand.

To develop a meaningful prayer life (devotional life) we must seek to give God the best possible time in our lives each day. Only then can we give our full attention (and priority) to the matters of prayer.

CONCLUSION:

Prayer is most meaningful when the total focus is on God - ***not the answers to our prayers***. The main point of prayer is the ability to "connect with God."

Answers to prayer, then become the proof that the connection has been made.

PART 4 - PRAYING WITH EXCITEMENT

Introduction

Hymns indicate in many ways our feeling towards God - and His feelings towards us. For example; "Oh, the pure delight of a single hour before the throne I spend."

Because **prayer is time spent with God ~** our supreme delight should be a time of great excitement.

In Ps. 40:16 it says; *"Let us all seek thee and **rejoice** and **be glad** in thee".* Apostle Paul simply says **"Rejoice evermore"** (1 Thess. 5:16) Paul gave us this commandment, that we should rejoice evermore, just before he gave us a further commandment when he told us to **"pray without ceasing".**

Below are seven key goals to help us pray daily with excitement. (They all begin with the letter "F"- so praying with excitement can be "Fun"!

1. FIND THE BEST POSSIBLE HOUR FOR PRAYER

Jesus often used the expression, "When thou Prayest.... (Matt. 6:6). The content of our prayer is not the only important factor - the time we set aside for prayer is just as important. If necessary, experiment until you find the very best possible time for prayer - a time when you are most alert - <u>not half asleep!</u>

2. FORGET ALL PREVIOUS FAILURE IN PRAYER

Speaking of his past failures, Apostle Paul said, "Forgetting those things which are behind, I press on towards the mark ... (Phil. 3:13). Nothing will hinder our prayers more than to remind ourselves of past failures. If you have made a previous commitment to regular daily prayers and are having trouble keeping this commitment - don't give up - keep trusting the Lord and you will finally succeed.

3. FIGHT ALL PRAYER HINDRANCES FIERCELY

Scripture is filled with many word pictures that use the analogy of warfare. Apostle Paul tells us to "fight the good fight of faith" (1.Tim. 6:12). In Ephesians, he speaks about putting on the "full armour of God", as preparation for warfare (Eph. 6:13-18).

We must fight all possible hindrances to prayer with fierce determination. Of course, problems of weariness, a wandering mind, and periodic boredom are to be expected. The important factor is that we never allow these difficulties to destroy our prayer effectiveness.

4. FOCUS ON THE LORD - RATHER THAT ON THE ANSWERS TO PRAYER

A major reason many people give up their praying is because they don't see immediate answers to their prayers!

These people have made their prayer focus the **"ANSWERS TO THEIR PRAYERS"** - not **THE LORD WHO ANSWERS PRAYER.**

Apostle Paul (The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews[2]) talks of "running life's race with patience - looking unto Jesus, the author, and the finisher of our faith". Heb. 12:2. We have to learn to run the race looking to Jesus, who loves and cares for us - not looking for the answers to our prayers.

5. FOLLOW A MEANINGFUL PLAN OF ACTION IN PRAYER

The most meaningful plan of action that anyone can follow in prayer is a plan, which gives glory and honour to God. It should include prayer for all lost souls - but be specific by name, because nothing can glorify God more than souls being redeemed out of the clutches of Satan and his demons.

Do you have a definite plan of action for your praying? Jesus taught His disciples to pray "after this manner ...". (Matt. 6:9) In fact Jesus taught them a definite plan of action in their praying.

[2] Refer to the Peshitta Bible

If we want to have an exciting time of prayer, we should seek to develop an actual plan of prayer. The plan should include all facets of the topics we have studied so far and then add additional refinements as we learn more about prayer in the following lessons.

6. FEED EVERYDAY ON SPIRITUAL FOOD

The Scripture says that Jeremiah found God's Word and actually ate the pages. The Prophet then declared "And thy Word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart". (Jer. 16:5).
In the wilderness Jesus said: "Man shall not live by bread alone - but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

If you study the great men of the Bible, you will soon discover that they not only spent many hours in a prayer relationship with God, but also spent many hours studying His word.
In fact, we must use God's word as a guide to our prayers - so that all our prayers will be **"in the will of God".**

7. FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD - IN LOVE

God said to Moses, "I will meet with thee and commune with thee". (Ex. 25:22). ***We must always look at prayer, first and foremost, as a means of communion with the Lord.***

We must not adopt the attitude that we use prayer as a means of "telling God how to carry out His plans and how to run His universe".

Instead, we must use prayer as a means of communion with God, to discover how God wishes us to become involved and be used, ***to help God carry out His plans.***

Far more time should be spent in **just loving God in prayer** - then we get closer to Him and He then can make us more easily aware of His plans and how He wishes to use us in carrying them out.

CONCLUSION:

In an age where humanity seeks many new thrills and excitements, we must recognise that our greatest excitement, as believers, is found in quiet prayer.

It has been said that; "Time will convince even the blindest and most frivolous of us, that happiness is no more to be found in the places we usually look, than it is to be dug up out of the ground. But the man who knows the secret of prayer lives at the top of human happiness".

PART 5 - HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

Introduction

More than any spiritual force, or power on earth, Satan fears the power of prayer.

In the "Screwtape Letters" by C S Lewis, the author makes this very clear, as explained below: - "Screwtape", a high echelon demon of the hellish state, is writing a letter to "Wormwood" a novice demon, who needs much helpful advice - if he is to survive. Screwtape writes to his nephew about prayer. He warns him; **"Interfere at any price"**, in any fashion, when people start to pray, for real prayer is lethal to our cause.

Because Satan fears prayer more than any other spiritual weapon in our arsenal - he attacks prayer with a host of deadly hindrances. Consider some of the hindrances that Satan uses to try and stop us (as prayer warriors) to divert our prayer weapons.

1. WRONG MOTIVES (A Distorted Heart)

James 4:3 says; "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss (for the wrong reasons), that you may consume it upon your lusts (your desires)".

One of the most important issues concerning prayer is knowing whether your prayer is in accordance with God's Word and God's will for your life [or not].

If you believe that God will answer all of your prayers, then you must ask yourself this question before you pray the prayer: "If God answers this prayer - ***will it bring glory and honour to Him?"***

If you can honestly answer "Yes" to this question, then the prayer will be in order and according to God's will for your life.

If you get "NO" as the answer to the above-mentioned question - then it is obvious that the prayer is not in accordance with God's word, nor in accordance with God's will for your life and hence you should not pray such a prayer - because God cannot answer it - as it will not bring honour and glory to His name!!!

2. SIN (A sinful heart)

Psalm 66:18 says: "If I regard iniquity (sinful thoughts) in my heart, the Lord will not hear me".

This is the reason why many believers do not have successful prayer lives, because they have refused to open up every compartment of their heart for the scrutiny of the Lord and they have kept some things hidden, because they are not ready, or have difficulty trying

to deal with these sinful issues. This is especially the case with lustful thoughts, situations, lies, deceit, etc.

But "**IT IS WRITTEN**", that the Lord will refuse to hear our prayers, if we continue to keeps these sins within our hearts and refuse to give them up to the Lord for Him to deal with them in our lives.

3. IDOLS (A divided heart)

Ezekiel 14:1-3 says; "Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat down before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, these men have set up idols in their hearts, and have put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces: should I be inquired of at all by them?"

Here were people of the tribes of Israel - of the chosen nation - who could trace their inheritance back to being **"sons of Abraham".** They had refused to give up "the mouthpiece of the Lord for that generation" and ask God for divine guidance.

It is clear from this and the previous sections that God Almighty expects - in fact demands that we are clean of all sins before we come into His presence to ask for our prayers to be answered.

The only prayer that God will hear and answer when we are in sin, is the prayer of confession, and a request for forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus Christ.

We must learn to keep short "sin accounts" with God and pray a "prayer of confession" for known and unknown sins each day. In this way we will always be in a situation where we can come before God Almighty and He will hear and answer our prayers.

4. UNFORGIVING SPIRIT (A bitter heart)

Mark 11:25 says; "And when you stand praying, **Forgive, if you have ought (anything) against anyone**: (so) that your Father which is in Heaven may forgive you of your trespasses (sins).
But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses".

We have to be very careful that we don't come before the Lord with a wrong attitude towards our brothers and sisters, or our neighbours.

God Almighty makes it very plain in this Scripture that if you are not prepared to forgive somebody who has hurt you, or done something to you then God Almighty will not forgive you your sins.

If God refuses to forgive us our sins because of our refusal to forgive others, then it is impossible for God to hear, or answer any of our prayers.

Therefore, our relationships with the people around us will greatly affect our prayer lives.

5. LACK OF GENEROSITY (A selfish heart)

Proverbs 21:13 says; "Whosoever closes his (her) ears to the cry of the poor, he shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard".

King Solomon was given a double portion of wisdom by the Lord. He clearly states that we have to be sensitive to the people around us. If we see somebody in need, we cannot turn our backs on him or her, and refuse to offer them assistance.
If we do then the Lord will turn His back upon us and that leads to our downfall- because the Lord will refuse to listen to our prayers until we change our attitude in this matter.

6. MISTREATMENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS (A neglectful heart)

1. Peter 3:7 says: "Likewise you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour to your wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life: **that your prayers will not be hindered".**

Many families have problems in their prayer lives, because of incorrect treatment of the family members by the husband to the wife, the children - or other relatives.

As God Almighty clearly made the family to be a special unit, bound together under the sacred pledge of the marriage vows, it is not surprising that the Lord will not listen to our prayers, if we (husbands) mistreat our wives, or any other member of our families.

The husband has a duty to be the ***Prophet, Priest, and King in the family***, with continual communication with the Lord, to ensure that the whole family unit is on the correct road before the Lord.

7. UNBELIEF (A doubting heart)

Matt. 17:20 says: "And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief; (you have not seen a miracle), for verily I say unto you, if you have the faith as a grain of a mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, remove (yourself) hence from here to that yonder place; and it shall remove (itself); and nothing shall be impossible to you".

It is no use praying any type of prayer to God, if you believe in your heart (before you pray) that the Lord will not answer that prayer.

It is a complete waste of your time and you are insulting God as well. We must have faith that God can answer our prayers - only then will He honour our faith - (even if it is only as large as a mustard seed) and answer our prayers, bringing glory and honour to his name.

CONCLUSION:

To overcome these hindrances to prayer, we must overcome the source of these hindrances - SATAN himself!

We must remember that much of the ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ will remain a complete mystery to us, if we fail to grasp this significant fact, that prayer warfare against Satan is one of our most important tasks here on earth.

No man can enter into a strongman's house and steal his goods, unless first he binds the strongman.

Only when Satan is bound and defeated in our lives are we assured of answered prayers from the Lord.

PART 6 - PRAYING WITH POWER

Text Jeremiah 33:3: *"Call unto Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know".*

Scripture reading, Mark 11:24 "Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have (already) received it, and it will be yours".

A famous preacher once stated; "The power of prayer can never be over-rated! They who cannot serve God by preaching need not have any regrets. If a man can but pray, he can do anything".

No true believer in Christ would ever argue that there is not great power in prayer. But first we must learn the secrets of developing practical prayer habits that brings power to our prayers.

Here are seven suggestions of how to achieve this in your individual prayer lives: -

1. PRAY EXPECTANTLY (MATT. 8:5-8)

When Christ came to the city of Capernaum, a centurion approached Jesus in great distress. His trusted servant was at the point of death. When Jesus declared, He would come to the centurion's house to heal the servant, the centurion said simply: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; **but speak the word only, and my servant will be healed**".

The centurion totally expected a miracle to occur when Jesus spoke the words. In the eyes of the centurion, it was not necessary for the

Lord to go to his house to heal the servant. All Jesus had to do was speak the words and he believed that his servant would be healed.

When we pray, do we pray expecting miracles from God? If we don't, then it is about time we started to change our attitude to God and to our commitments to prayer.

2. PRAY SINCERELY (Luke 20:45-47)

Jesus taught his disciples to beware of insincere prayers. He spoke of the scribes who developed a habit of praying "long prayers" simply for the purpose of attracting attention. (They were praying for the wrong reasons) It is evident from other lessons in Scripture that insincere prayer renders prayer ineffective. (Read Luke 18:9-14)

3. PRAY UNSELFISHLY (James 4:3)

"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motive, so that you may spend what you get on your pleasures".

The Scriptures warn us that many prayers go unanswered because our goals in asking for a particular blessing is that we might "spend it on our individual passions" - not for the good of others.

When Moses talked to God and asked things for the nation of Israel, God always honoured his requests and answered his prayers. ***But when Moses asked to see the glory of God, (for himself) God refused to answer this prayer.***

We have to learn to distinguish between "selfish", and "unselfish" prayers.

Unselfish prayer is prayer that focuses on God and on others **before** it focuses on us, the person praying the prayer.

To combat selfish prayers always ask this question before offering up a petition to the Lord. "Will this prayer I am praying, if answered in the way I am praying it, bring glory and honour to God?"

If it does not, then don't pray the prayer that way - think about it and rephrase your petition to the Lord.

4. PRAY FREQUENTLY (Daniel 6:10)

Few Old Testament Bible characters were used as mightily by God as Daniel. The Bible reveals that God let Daniel in on His most personal secrets (See Daniel 2:22).

But how did Daniel get access to these secrets? The Bible says that Daniel prayed 3 times a day. The Psalmist met with the Lord "evening, morning and noon day" (Ps. 55:17)

In 1 Chron. 16:11, we are challenged to "seek His face continually" In 1 Thess. 5:17, Paul challenges us to pray constantly (without ceasing).

Frequent prayer to God keeps the lines of communication open - firstly between you and God, and secondly between God and you.

There is no better reason for praying that this - to keep the lines of communication open - so you can be constantly in the presence of the Lord.

5. PRAY HUMBLY (2. CHRON. 7:14)

Humility means to lower one's estimate of oneself. This is best accomplished by enriching our estimates of others. God makes it clear in His word that prayer alone does not bring healing to our land - **but humility with prayer does**.

The Bible says: ***"{If} my people, which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; {then} (and only then) will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land".***

This is a "Conditional Promise" from the Lord. [IF] *we do four things,* ***[THEN]*** *God will do three things. If we don't ~~ then He won't!*

Humility associated with prayer can result in miracles.

Notice that "praying" and "seeking God's face" are two distinctly different things.

6. PRAY SPECIFICALLY

When Gideon put his fleece before the Lord, he was offering a very specific prayer to God. Likewise, when Hannah approached God in her deepest need, she was very specific in her prayer request. (1. Sam. 1:10-20).

She not only requested God to give her a son, but she also promised to give the son back to God to be "totally in His service".

How could God possibly refuse such a prayer? He could not, because if answered it would bring glory and honour to Him.

7. PRAY JOYFULLY

(Philippians 4:4-7) gives us clear instruction about how we should pray. In the same context that Paul told the Philippians to "be careful about nothing" and to offer "prayer and supplications" he also commanded them to "rejoice in the Lord always".

Paul was aligning joy with prayer. Jesus actually said He wants us to receive answers to our prayers, so we will be "full of joy". He told His disciples "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". (John 16:24)

CONCLUSION:

God wants His followers to develop ***"a ministry of prayer"***, that leads to an out-flowing of His power.

We must remember; "**Prayer brings power". Prayer is power! The place of prayer is the place of power.**

Jesus said; "My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations". **Jesus was really saying that he wants every church building to become a power-house.**

Again, I remind you of the slogan; **Prayer changes things. No prayer - no changes!**

PART 7 - QUALITIES OF THE PRAYER WARRIOR

INTRODUCTION

It is clear from the Scriptures, that God uses praying saints most in His plans to change history.

But what does it take to be a true prayer warrior? The psalmist asked the question: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (Ps. 15:1)

In our study today, we will prayerfully examine five scriptural qualities necessary for those who would choose to develop a world-changing ministry for intercession.

You must first notice that I say "choose to develop this ministry".

This is something **we must be prepared to do**. We must make a positive, conscious decision, that this is how we want to serve the Lord for the rest of our lives.

1. HAVE PURITY IN YOUR LIFE (Ps 4:3 and Job 8:5-6)

It is the Law of God, that a pure life is essential for true spiritual accomplishment. The Bible says, "But know that the Lord has set apart him that is Godly for Himself; the Lord will hear when I call unto Him".

In Job we read. "If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplications to the Almighty; **If thou were pure and upright**; surely now he would wait for thee, and make a habitation of thy righteousness prosperous". (Job 8:5-6)

When Jesus preached the "Sermon on the Mount" He said: Blessed are the **pure in heart;** for they shall see God". (Matt. 5:8)

To be a true prayer warrior we must first develop a method and style of life which keeps us **"pure in our hearts".** Remember Jesus said: **"Be ye Holy as I am Holy".**

2. HAVE HONESTY IN YOUR LIFE

God is not only honoured by people who manifest honesty, He promises to be attentive and listen to their prayers. The Psalmist said: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (Ps. 145:18). Personal integrity is essential to successful prayer.

Webster's dictionary defines integrity as "a state, or quality of being complete, undivided, or unbroken".

In the Book of Hebrews, the author requested prayer for honesty - "Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things be willing to live honestly" (Hebrews 13:18).

If you want to be a successful prayer warrior, you must live an honest life, both with the believers and the unbelievers alike.

3. HAVE GENEROSITY IN ALL YOUR ACTIONS (Acts 10:4 & Isaiah 58:6-9)

God sent an angel to the house of Cornelius to tell him what to do.

The Bible says; "And He (the angel) said unto him (Cornelius), thy prayers and thine alms (offerings and generous gifts) are come up for a memorial before God.

Because Cornelius was generous in his giving and in his caring for the poor, it got God's attention. God had to do something about it.

Through the Prophet Isaiah **God declares that generosity leads to spiritual victory.** He told Israel that if they loosed the bands of those living in wickedness, their prayers would be heard in Heaven. God says; "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am". (Is. 58:9)

In both of the cases mentioned above, the outward action of the people was to help somebody else. When we do this constantly, God is impressed and will offer blessing to us in return.

This is a secret that we all need to grasp if we wish to become successful prayer warriors for the Lord.

4. PRAYER WITH TENACITY FOR OTHERS (Is. 62:1)

A spirit of tenacity is essential to effective prayer. We must boldly seek after the goal for which we are praying. Like Jacob in the Old

Testament, let us refuse to give up in our wrestling with God over every issue. He said; "I will not let thee go except thou bless me". (Gen. 32:24-30)

Isaiah said; "For Zion's sake, **I will not hold my peace,** and for Jerusalem's sake, **I will not rest,** until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness and salvation thereof as a lamp burning". (Is. 62:1).

We have to become like bull terriers. When they grab onto your leg, they refuse to let go - they lock up their jaws and hold on - even unto death.

We have to be like that, as prayer warriors in our praying, continually holding onto God - not letting go until He answers our prayers.

5. LOYALTY (1 John 3:22)

Loyalty indicates a fierce commitment to any assignment give to us by a superior. It is also a total commitment to that superior. Loyalty includes a steadfast faithfulness to a task, no matter how difficult that task may appear to be, or what the circumstances may develop or become. Apostle John said; "And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, **because we keep His commandments**, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight".

The truly loyal follower of Jesus Christ is the obedient follower of Christ. It is to this individual that God promises His richest blessings and the most lasting fruit.

Remember in John 15:16 we are told to bear fruit and **that our fruit must remain**. It is only in loyalty to Christ that we can be assured that our fruit will remain.

CONCLUSION:

From the dawn of history, it has been God's plan to use humanity to carry out His plans and purposes for the salvation of all the nations, here on earth. God has no other plans. God does not have a Plan "B".

If we fail to evangelise the world, then Satan is guaranteed a victory in many people's hearts. God's only plan to change this world is in the hands of Christ's true followers, in congregations around the world today.

Each of us must live our lives with the recognition and confidence that God wishes to use us mightily to tear down satanic strongholds around the world with our prayers.

Will you willingly commit a portion of each of your days to help change our world through your prayers? God expects no less from us!

So, are you ready to pray NOW?[3]

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